

## Repeat offenders' anklets to detect alcohol

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**By Craig Gustafson**  
STAFF WRITER

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With nearly 500 chronic drunken drivers in the region, county supervisors gave the go-ahead yesterday for a pilot program to place alcohol-detecting ankle bracelets on the worst violators.

The yearlong project involving 20 anklets begins in April.

"This county, I believe, must be as aggressive as we possibly can in addressing the devastating problem of drunk driving which continues to cause countless amounts of damage and, more importantly, ruins lives," said Supervisor Dianne Jacob, who proposed the idea.

The anklets, which detect alcohol through a person's perspiration, are used in 20 states and by more than 200 law enforcement agencies, including the Riverside County Sheriff's Department.

Repeat offenders in the program will be required to wear the anklets for 90 days while on probation. The program, which will cost \$73,000 in equipment, will then compare their recidivism rate with offenders who did not wear bracelets.

Stacy Adams, a county probation director, said the ankle bracelets will not act as tracking devices and will not submit data in real time. Offenders will be required to relay the information by regularly plugging the devices into a phone line, she said.

The department will select a test group from three categories: chronic offenders charged with a felony; those on probation who fail scheduled alcohol tests; and those who evade arrest while driving under the influence.

If an anklet detects alcohol, the Probation Department can intensify treatment or arrest the person on suspicion of violating the terms of release. Many chronic drunken drivers are prohibited from drinking alcohol while on probation.

The county has the second-highest number of driving under the influence offenses in the state, behind Los Angeles County, Adams said. In 2005, there were more than 13,000 convictions with nearly 500 people having three or more prior drunken-driving offenses.

Supervisor Ron Roberts said the need for such a program was highlighted last week, when a drunken driver was sentenced to prison for 21 years to life for killing a 22-year-old hairdresser in a wreck on state Route 67 last year. The driver had four previous convictions for drunken driving.

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